THE MOUNT SINAI MEDICAL CENTER
ONE GUSTAVE L. LEVY PLACE • NEW YORK, NY 10029-6574

Mount Sinai School of Medicine • The Mount Sinai Hospital

The Lillian and Henry M. Stratton-Hans Popper
Department of Pathology
Box 1194

(212) 241-8014

October 17, 1993

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
The Rockefeller University
New York, NY 10021

Dear Dr. Lederberg,

Thank you for calling my attention to the paper by T.G. Dunahay on transformation of Chlamydomonas using silicon carbide whiskers. I am sending you a reprint of our 1993 paper on asbestos-mediated transfection of mesothelial cells. These cells appear to be exquisitely sensitive to both transfecting and cytotoxic effects of asbestos fibers. All types of asbestos fibers can mediate transfection. Please also check out the 1991 paper by George Dubes, referenced in our paper. He essentially confirms our earlier results but uses much higher doses of asbestos fibers to transfect, doses which would be toxic to the mesothelial cells.

Most of our work over the last year has been on pura, a new protein we have discovered which be believe plays a role in control of initiation of DNA replication in mammalian cells. I am sending you 2 reprints of our recent papers on this protein. The most exciting work is yet to be published.We have found that pura binds to the retinoblastoma protein, Rb, which is the product of a tumor suppressor gene. We have now identified the region of pura that binds to Rb, and the part of the gene encoding this region is mutated in 4 of 13 mesotheliomas but not in normal tissue from the same patients. We are now beginning to look in lung, breast and colon tumors. I shall keep you apprised.

Thank you again, and best wishes.

Sincerely,

Edward M. Johnson, Ph.D.
Professor

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